

Standard 8-4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the impact of Reconstruction on the people and government of South Carolina.

8-4.4 Explain how events during Reconstruction improved opportunities for African Americans but created a backlash that, by the end of Reconstruction, negated the gains African Americans had made, including the philanthropy of northern aid societies, the assistance provided by the federal government such as the Freedmen's Bureau, and their advancement in politics and education. (H, P, E)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand / Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge

In 3rd grade, students explained how the Civil War affected South Carolina's economy, including destruction of plantations, towns, factories, and transportation systems (3-4.3). They also summarized the effects of Reconstruction in South Carolina, including the development of public education, racial advancements and tensions, and economic changes (3-4.4).

In 5th grade, students explained the effects of Reconstruction on African-Americans, including their new rights and restrictions, their motivations to relocate to the North and the West, and the actions of the Freedmen's Bureau (5-1.3). They compared the economic and social effects of Reconstruction on different populations, including the move from farms to factories and the change from the plantation system to sharecropping (5-1.4). They explained the purpose and motivations behind the rise of discriminatory laws and groups and their effect on the rights and opportunities of African Americans in different regions of the United States (5-1.5).

In United States History, students will summarize the progress made by African Americans during Reconstruction and the subsequent reversals brought by Reconstruction's end, including the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau, gains in educational and political opportunities, and the rise of anti-African American factions and legislation (USHC-4.5).

It is essential for students to know:

The passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, the Freedman's Bureau and the enforcement of Congressional Reconstruction established a basis for equality. As a result of the constitution of 1868, social and political conditions for African Americans improved in South Carolina. However, most white South Carolinians were hostile to African American equality. A white backlash against social and political equality for African Americans manifested itself in a campaign of violence, intimidation and fraud that eventually reestablished white control over the government of South Carolina.

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, known as the **Freedman's Bureau**, was established by Congress prior to the end of the Civil War. The Bureau was the first line of assistance to everyone affected by the war, including whites, as well as destitute freedmen. This federal agency under the control of the United States army provided food, clothing, medical care, education and some protection from the hostile white environment. The Freedman's Bureau helped many freedmen find jobs and established courts to protect the illiterate workers. The bureau was also charged with distributing to freedmen those lands that had been abandoned during the war or that had been confiscated as punishment for disloyalty to the Union. However, the Bureau was forced to take these lands back when President Johnson pardoned the white owners and returned their property to them. Congress would not pass legislation granting lands to freedmen because they respected the constitutional rights of southern whites to their landed property. The great majority of African Americans did *not* receive land that would have given them economic independence. In lieu of having their own land, the Freedman's Bureau helped African Americans to establish the sharecropping relationship with the worker-less plantation owner. Although this system mired African Americans as well as landless poor whites in economic dependence

and poverty for generations, it did provide an economic role in the reconstruction of South Carolina. The most important contribution of the Freedman's Bureau, however, was the facilitation of the establishment of over 1,000 schools throughout the South.

Northern philanthropists also contributed to the education of the freedman. The Northern Aid Society created the Penn School in Beaufort. Religious denominations and Northern philanthropists also provided support for the establishment of colleges for African Americans in South Carolina [including Claflin College, Benedict College, Allen University and Avery Institute]. Both men and women traveled to the South to serve as teachers at schools established by philanthropists or the Freedman's Bureau. Although mocked and mislabeled as "carpetbaggers" by Southerners, these missionaries made a significant contribution to the education of African Americans. For their part, African Americans flocked to the privately supported freedom schools and the new public schools, anxious for the opportunity to learn to read and write denied them during slavery. Most freedmen, young and old, desperately wanted to learn. Prior to the end of slavery, some blacks had established schools.

African Americans also made significant progress in **politics** (see 8-4.3).

African American gains created a backlash among white South Carolinians. Outnumbered by the African American political majority, white South Carolinians refused to participate in government. Instead they carried on a campaign of terror against African American and the white Republicans who were perceived as assisting them. With federal troops withdrawn and the state militia disbanded after the 1868 constitution, vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Riflemen and the Red Shirts, were free to engage in harassment, intimidation and murder. The federal government responded by passing the Ku Klux Klan Act and President Grant sent federal soldiers to make an example of South Carolina. Although some Klansmen surrendered and were brought to trial, the federal government's feeble efforts only had the effect of encouraging the insurgency. By 1876, the white insurgents were ready to contest the political control of the Republicans in an election.

It is not essential for students to know:

Students do not need to know that the term "forty acres and a mule" comes from General Sherman's Field Order #15. This order allotted 40 acres, the amount of land that a family could work, and a military mule for plowing. The Freedman's Bureau was charged with implementing this plan. However, President Johnson overturned this order and later returned confiscated lands to pardoned Southerners.

Students do not need to know that, in 1861, Mary Peake, a free black woman, opened a school in Hampton, Virginia. On South Carolina's sea islands, a black cabinetmaker began teaching openly after having covertly operated a school for years. African Americans were also interested in access to higher education. In 1873, the African American leaders in the state legislature compelled the all white South Carolina College (today's University of South Carolina) to admit African Americans. From 1873 to 1877, the college admitted students of both races.

Students do not need to know about the origins of the Ku Klux Klan as a social club that engaged in pranks nor how the violent actions of the KKK led to the reestablishment of the state militia. Because whites refused to serve, this militia was almost entirely made up of African Americans. Whites cited this as an excuse for their terrorism, saying their "rifle clubs" were only intended to protect them against the corrupt Republican government and its black militia. However, this is part of the myth of Reconstruction perpetrated by newspapers and the white leadership in the South. The Klan was the reason for the establishment of the militia, rather than a reaction to it. Students do not need to know that the vigilante groups were a de facto government in parts of South Carolina. They do not need to know that Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest was first leader of the Klan. They do not need to know that Wade Hampton was able to control the Klansmen's actions showing that he had the real power in the state rather than the Republican government which had authority but little power.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessment will require students to **explain** the improved opportunities that African Americans had during Reconstruction and why and how the white backlash limited these opportunities. Students should be able to **compare** the roles of Northern philanthropists and the federal government in providing opportunities for the freedmen. Students should be able to **interpret** maps, graphs and political cartoons and **infer** their relationship to information about the time period.

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